R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 016 546 40 RC 002 129

FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS. FINAL REPORT.

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REPORT NUMBER BR-6-1199 PUB DATE 66
GRANT OEG-32-15-0000-6028
EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.84 19P.

DESCRIPTORS- ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION, EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN, EDUCATION SERVICE CENTERS, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION, MODELS, PERSONNEL, PROFESSIONAL CONTINUING EDUCATION, *RURAL AREAS, *RURAL EDUCATION, RESEARCH, *SPECIAL EDUCATION, SERVICES, TRANSPORTATION,

A CONFERENCE FOR 13 WESTERN STATE DIRECTORS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION WAS HELD IN HELENA, MONTANA, MAY 31 - JUNE 2, 1967. THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS CONFERENCE WERE--(1) TO STIMULATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN IN WESTERN STATE DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION, (2) TO PROVIDE A FOLLOW-UP OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN REMOTE AREAS, (3) TO STIMULATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAM MODELS REPORTED IN THE NATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE REPORT, AND (4) TO PROVIDE BETTER UTILIZATION OF BUDGETED FUNDS AND MORE COMPLETE REALIZATION OF THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVE OF THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL (DENVER RESEARCH CONFERENCE). DISCUSSION GROUPS FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS--ADMINISTRATION ORGANIZATION, FINANCIAL PATTERNS, PERSONNEL PROBLEMS, AND SUPPORTIVE SERVICES. PARTICIPANTS CONCLUDED THAT THE CONFERENCE PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSIDERATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND A DELINEATION OF THOSE PROBLEMS DIRECTLY RELATED TO SPARSELY SETTLED AREAS WHICH HAVE REGIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE WEST. (ES)

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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FINAL REPORT

FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE ON SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

USOE Grant #32-15-0000-6028

Submitted by

Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education
Gene Hensley, Project Director

PC 0052 1199

Background Information

The National Research Conference on Special Education Services in Sparsely Populated Areas was held in Denver, olorado, March 28-31, 1966. The conference report, Special Education Services in Sparsely Populated Areas: Guidelines for Research, which constituted a final report of this conference was produced and distributed as follows: twenty-five copies for the Office of Education; one-hundred copies for the Library of Congress; and forty copies for conference participants. An additional two-thousand copies were prepared and distributed nationally to State Directors of Special Education, the National Education Association, various public and private agencies, and interested professional persons throughout the United States. The demand for additional copies of this publication has been exceedingly heavy. The supply is now exhausted, although it is hoped that a second printing will be possible.

Briefly, the conference report was divided into four main areas: administrative organization, financial patterns, personnel, and supportive services. Additional sections dealt with basic problems in research and provisions for service, and guidelines for a possible future cooperative area study of special education needs within a designated geographical area. Each section of this report dealt with numerous research questions and procedures including some of the following:

1. Identification of researchable variables, the most appropriate components or factors for study in research of this type.

2. Research procedures including data sources, suggested designs, and suggested methods for comparing administrative units under study.

3. Suggested types of research projects needed to provide practical solutions to the administrative problems of the rural areas.

Evaluation of Conference

At the pre-conference planning period for the National Research Conference, the Planning Committee felt that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Research Conference should be attempted. It was planned that in the year following the conference, an effort would be made to evaluate the impact of the conference on proposed research and related projects concerned with special education services in remote areas. Accordingly, conference participants, and other research and service personnel were contacted and asked to comment on the impact of this conference on their professional activities. More than 70% of the conference participants responded to these inquiries and many provided detailed information concerning the impact of the conference on their particular activities and interests. In addition, Directors of Special Education or their representatives from thirteen western states subjectively reported on the effects of the conference and the utilization of the conference report in their respective states.

Summary of Correspondence with Conference Participants

At least two broad generalizations can be drawn from personal and written communications with conference participants:

1. Participants expressed the belief that the overall benefits from conferences such as this one are difficult to document but are, nevertheless, present because of the opportunities for interaction with researchers and other personnel representing different disciplines and geographical areas, who are collectively interested in educational problems relating to remoteness and sparsity.

2. It may be too soon to effectively evaluate the conference. Many respondents indicated that considerable preliminary planning and discussion was underway in their respective states, agencies, or institutions and that more detailed reporting would be possible within a few months.

In view of the above considerations, it is anticipated that an effort will be made to continuously assess the impact of the conference on proposed and ongoing research over the next several months. Discussions in several WICHE sponsored meetings involving special education and rehabilitation personnel held since the 1966 conference have tended to support the importance of continued evaluation.

Some Examples of the Participants' Evaluation of the Impact of the National Research Conference

Participants in the Research Conference have reported the following events which they feel may be directly related to the working conference:

1. Several participants from higher education reported that they have begun to give special consideration to applicants for schlorships from prospective teachers who come from rural sections and have attempted to provide a tailored series of training experiences in areas relating to professional skills, community organization and referral services.

2. Participating college and university personnel have reported that the conference report has been widely used in graduate seminars in special education.

3. Certain western college and university personnel reported that they have given priority to speaking and consultation in rural areas where they believe their help and leadership can become incentives for other professional workers.

4. Increased activity in the western states with persons interested in legislation has been reported to ensure that services such as orientation and mobility of the blind, locating and serving deaf-blind children and visual screening extend into rural areas.

5. Participants from Montana reported the establishment of an audiological center associated with the University of Montana for providing services of a diagnostic and rehabilitative nature to hearing-impaired individuals in western Montana. This center reportedly began services July 1, 1967, and is funded for three years by the National Institute of Neurological and Sensory Diseases. It is the intention of this facility to develop research based on problems of use of amplification for the acoustically handicapped in rural areas, although this aspect of the project has not been formalized to date.

6. Participants from Illinois reported that the conference and the published report have been helpful in the organization of a joint agreement in the Peoria, Illinois, area; this particular joint agreement encompassed thirty-one school districts and covered a large geographical area.

7. The Department of Rural Education of the National Education Association distributed the conference report to rural education leaders throughout the United States.

8. Developments supporting conference recommendations outlined in the report have been cited. Regional service agencies (multi-school district) have been established in several states. Participants reported that Nebraska has created nineteen regional agencies; a state plan for sixteen agencies is in the process of being created in Iowa; approximately one-third of Washington has been organized into five regional agencies; twenty regional service centers are now in the process of being established in Texas; both Ohio and Pennsylvania have completed state programs for such agencies. In each of these states, special education programs are included in the conception of regional services. While these are not research projects, these developments are certainly closely related to the published outcomes set forth as conference objectives by those in attendance at the conference.

9. Western states reported that they have continued to pursue all avenues in developing various types of community resources throughout each state. Individual respondents suggested that the Denver conference contributed indirectly to an increased emphasis on special education and rehabilitation services in rural areas.

10. The University of Arizona reported that they have been involved in a number of demonstration activities in which groups of children and adolescents from outlying and rural communities at the high-school age are brought for

one, two and three-week periods for vocational evaluation and testing. Results of these evaluations are returned to the school districts to be used in determining educational services. These activities related to recommendations made at the conference. They also report that psychological examinations have been provided on a continuing basis for children in all disability categories from the outlying counties in southern Arizona, and that visiting teams of specialists have been provided to work with the disabled youngsters. They have also extended services to blind and deaf persons from outlying rural areas.

11. Many universities reported the development of course content related to the discussion of problems in special education at the Denver conference. Several universities reported that doctoral research concerning problems related to sparsity has increased. One State Director of Special Education specifically suggested that the Denver conference stimulated him to write and submit a proposal for the identification of handicapped children in rural sections of his state.

12. The possibility of a large cooperative area study directed toward the identification of special education needs in a designated geographical area in the West is now being explored by WICHE. Plans for an initial meeting involving interested educational researchers in the West are now underway and the meeting will be held early in fall, 1967.

Follow-Up Conference concerning Special Education Services in Sparsely Populated Areas

In May, 1966, a progress report on USOE Grant #32-15-0000-6028, National Research Conference on Special Education Services in Sparsely Populated Areas, was submitted to the Office of Education. In this report,

permission was requested to use project funds for activities not covered in the original proposal. This request called for utilizing an anticipated $3,906 not used in activities covered in the original proposal (Denver Research Conference) but no increase in funds for a Follow-Up Conference involving the State Directors of Special Education in thirteen western states.

It was proposed that a two-day conference be held involving as participants the thirteen State Directors of Special Education from the western states composing the WICHE region. The conference was to be jointly sponsored by WICHE and the Montana State Department of Public Instruction. The purposes of the conference were:

1. To stimulate research activities in western State Departments of Education designed to improve special education services for exceptional children residing in remote areas.

2. To provide a follow-up of the National Research Conference on Special Education Services in Remote Areas.

3. To stimulate the implementation of innovative program models reported in the National Research Conference Report.

4. To provide better utilization of budgeted funds and more complete realization of the goals and objectives of the original proposal.

This request was subsequently approved and the Follow-Up Conference was held in Helena, Montana, May 31-June 2, 1967.

Participants in the Follow-Up Conference included:

Mr. Don Breimo, Director of Rural Education, Alaska;

Mr. Floyd Baribeau, State Director of Special Education, Arizona;

Dr. Hatsuko Kawahara, Director of Special Education, Hawaii;

Mrs. Eleanor Bodahl, Coordinator of Special Education, Idaho;

Mr. James Forrestal, Director of Special Education, New Mexico;

Mr. Roy Berry, Director of Special Education, Reno, Nevada (representing Mr. Thomas Murdoch, State Director of Special Education, Nevada);

Dr. Joy Hills Gubser, Director of Special Education, Oregon;

Mrs. Mae Evans, Speech and Hearing Specialist, Utah (representing Mr. Elwood Pace, Director of Special Education, Utah);

Mrs. Helena G. Adamson, Director of Special Education, Washington;

Mr. Paul Babbitt, Director of Special Education, Montana;

Dr. Gene Hensley, Director of Special Education and Rehabilitation Programs, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education;

Dr. Robert Kroepsch, Executive Director, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education.

Conference Procedure

Directors of Special Education from thirteen western states were invited to participate in the Follow-Up Conference held in Helena, Montana. Only one of the participants in this conference was in attendance at the National Research Conference held earlier in Denver, Colorado. Participation was limited to State Directors of Special Education or their representatives in order to achieve a high degree of personal interaction which might not have been possible if a larger number of persons had been present. In addition to the previously stated objectives of the conference, those invited to participate were instructed that the Follow-Up Conference was an extension of the earlier Research Conference and that the purpose

of the proposed discussions would be to stimulate research activities in western states designed to improve special education services for exceptional children residing in remote areas; to stimulate the implementation of certain models or plans for action; and to discuss the implications of the published report for those who are responsible for extending services to exceptional children in the West.

Conference activities began on Wednesday evening, May 31, 1967, with an address by Miss Harriet Miller, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Montana and followed by an informal discussion of her presentation (see attached conference agenda).

Conference activities for the remaining two days began with a resume of the earlier Research Conference, an outline of conference objectives and informal discussions of problems relating to sparsity of population. These activities were followed by individual presentations and discussions of specific state problems relating to services for exceptional children. Each State Director or his representative was asked to briefly address the group concerning educational problems relating to remoteness in his particular state.

For purposes of discussion, topic areas were grouped as follows: discussion of administration organization, discussion of financial patterns, discussion of personnel problems, and discussion of supportive services. Discussions of these topic areas were followed by a session where participants attempted to individually rank some of the major problem areas in providing services to exceptional children as a preliminary attempt to establish some

priorities for research and demonstration projects. Conference activities were concluded with a discussion of short-term, intermediate, and long-term objectives for local and regional action by states. Individual participants attempted to assess their role in stimulating research and action programs within the framework of their present administrative structure.

Administration

The participants began with the assumption that the traditional arrangements for administering schools in remote areas do not generally provide for excellence in comprehensive special education programs. Large geographical areas and a comparatively low incidence of children with special education problems are viewed as major problems in providing improved and expanded services but there are many obstacles to efficient and effective services which are of specific concern to individual states, e.g., poverty, ethnicity, and uniquely characteristic geographical problems.

Participants focused on a number of techniques of program implementation in sparsely populated areas:

1. Transportation of children to service centers or to adjoining school districts.

2. Transportation of faculty and staff to remote areas where small numbers of handicapped children reside.

3. Development of communication systems which would serve to implement curricula not otherwise possible.

4. Developing models for continuing education and in-service education for teachers now living and working in remote areas.

The administrative problem areas for research which were given the greatest attention by the group are as follows:

1. The need for specific factual information about exceptional children and their special education needs.

Participants collectively expressed the opinion that basic data concerning children in remote areas in each of the sparsely populated western states were extremely limited. They were concerned with such basic problems as:

1. How many handicapped children now live in specific remote areas?

2. What services are now available?

3. How stable is the subculture?

It was felt that basic information of this type was essential before effective and long-term services could be developed.

2. The need for detailed study of current administrative programs, regional programs and joint agreements.

Specifically, what area or regional programs are now in effect? How successful are they? What strengths and weaknesses can be identified in existing administrative organizations? What would be the impact of regional programs which cut across state lines on existing programs within individual states?

3. The need for expanding state leadership and services in special education in states where remoteness is of major concern.

Discussions were directed toward ways and means of effecting state and regional studies in special education as they might relate to talent and leadership at the state level. The implications of recent legislation for expanded supervisory personnel at the state level were discussed.

Finance

Participants agreed that financial patterns typically vary in relation to particular administrative procedures. It was generally accepted that effective special education programs are often expensive but that research data concerning appropriate methods of financing special education are generally lacking. It was felt that problems relating to financial patterns in special education were among the most important but that basic data concerning programs and services are needed in many areas before comparative evaluation of various existing financial patterns is practical.

In considering both administrative procedures and financial patterns, individual participants felt that the needed services should be determined based on known facts concerning incidence of handicapping conditions, distribution and characteristics of population, and geographical factors; that the changing functions of existing institutions and services should be explored; and that possible duplication of services by both private and public agencies should be carefully examined.

Provided that certain basic data concerning programs and services are available, it was expressed that a major "research need" concerns a study of variables constituting the cost index for special education. The

need for a realistic appraisal of special education costs was expressed unanimously by the group. Considerable time was given to a discussion of variables cited by individual members of the group. Specifically, they were concerned with costs as they relate to geographical and population characteristics, variations in taxability as it relates to program support, and various factors which are important in determining expressed attitudes toward financial support of both special and general education. The participants also felt that immediate attention should be given to the study of current systems of allocating funds particularly in relation to the relative effectiveness in providing increased services for exceptional children.

Personnel

The wide range of personnel needs in providing special education services in remote areas was extensively discussed. Of major concern was the range in quality and quantity of preparation of those who provide educational services in these areas and the administrative provisions through which services are made available, e.g., special classes, regular class programs, and consultative services. It was stressed that the regular classroom teacher in many remote areas has virtually total responsibility for the child's learning opportunities and that this person's background, professional training, and orientation should be studied as well as creative means of providing needed ancillary services.

Again the participants felt that basic data were needed before certain problem areas were researchable--data concerning availability of resources, as well as behavioral data relating to the children requiring services.

The group noted that recruitment, selection, and retention of professional personnel was of major concern in all sparsely populated areas, but that problems relating to recruitment and retention of teachers appeared to vary considerably from one geographical area to another. It was felt that factors involved in retention and selection of teachers for remote areas should be intensively studied. It was felt that the current efforts to utilize personnel indigenous to the area should be carefully observed and evaluated as a potentially valuable means of alleviating manpower shortages. It was also expressed that the relation of professional preparation (state certification and university program requirements) to the "tasks" required of teachers of exceptional children should be examined. The secondary effects of remoteness, e.g., poverty, ethnicity, bilingualism, etc., were deemed critical in determining the possible need for changes in existing patterns of service.

Services

Participants attempted to examine the relationship between specific community characteristics and attitudes and the availability and nature of various special educational services including special classes, various clinical and evaluative services, and continuation education programs. Discussions were focused on values and attitudes of families, children, and professional persons; ethnic and cultural differences, socioeconomic factors, and specific handicapping conditions; educational and social processes as they relate to observed changes in organization and function of existing community agencies.

It was felt that a great deal of data concerning patterns of service, community efforts, and availability of professional personnel which have implications for research in special education was alre dy available but there was a need for "pulling together" this information into a meaningful configuration.

Implications and Conclusions

It is believed that the Follow-Up Conference served a number of important purposes. It provided special education leadership personnel in the WICHE region an opportunity to collectively consider research problems and models which were documented at the National Research Conference and to individually consider areas of research and demonstration which might be feasible in their respective states. It also provided an opportunity to delineate research problems relating to sparsity which have regional significance in the West. The format of the conference and the restricted participation (limited to State Directors or their representatives) was conducive for ascertaining commonalities and differences within states which may have relevance for future planning and cooperation.

Participants attempted to establish short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals in regard to implementation of research and demonstration projects within their states. It was generally expressed that individual states had a responsibility for some basic data collection and preliminary investigation concerning their respective special education needs, but that cooperative ways of examining and solving problems should be carefully examined.

It is felt that conferences of this type characterized by selective participation and well-defined objectives can stimulate the development of research and demonstration projects within states and highlight the importance of cooperation among states with common problems relating to sparsity.

State Directors of Special Education and their representatives attending this conference expressed their desire to meet annually for the primary purpose of seeking solutions to special education problems in remote areas and to evaluate their progress in effecting research and demonstration projects in their states.

AGENDA

FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE - SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

Participation of State Directors of Special Education in the Thirteen Western States
May 31 through June 2 — Holiday Inn — Helena, Montana

Wednesday, May 31, 1967

6:30 p.m.	Dinner Address - "An Overview of Special Education Services in Sparsely Populated Areas" Miss Harriet Miller, Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Montana	
8:30 p.m.	Informal Discussion	Directors Room

Thursday, June 1, 1967

9:30 a.m.	Outline of Conference Objectives and Discussion of Problems Relating to Sparsity
10:30 a.m.	Individual Presentations and Discussion of Specific State Problems Relating to Services For Exceptional Children
11:45 a.m.	Lunch
1:15 p.m.	Discussion of Administrative Organization
2:15 p.m.	Coffee
2:30 p.m.	Discussion of Financial Patterns
3:30 p.m.	Open Discussion
3:45 p.m.	Summary of Activities

Agenda Cont'd

Friday, June 2, 1967

9:30 a.m.	Discussion of Personnel Problems in Sparsely Populated Areas
10:30 a.m.	Coffee
10:45 a.m.	Discussion of Supportive Services
11:45 a.m.	Open Discussion
12:00	Lunch
1:30 p.m.	Ranking of Major Problems in Providing Services to Exceptional Children in Sparsely Populated Areas--Implications for Action
2:30 p.m.	Discussion of Short-Term, Intermediate and Long-Term Objectives and Actions by States
3:30 p.m.	Summary of Conference
3:45 p.m.	Adjournment